

SBSI Brown Bag

Wednesday, November 20, 2019

12:00pm - 1:15pm

Solomon B50

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How do we feel when angels turn out to be demons?: The experience and effects of misjudging moral character

ABSTRACT: In everyday life, we make important judgments about other people's moral character. These judgments help us understand others, predict what they are likely to do, and protect ourselves from those who mean us harm. Despite our interest in assessing moral character accurately, individuals who seem like good people can sometimes surprise us by revealing previously unseen immoral sides to their personality. How do we feel when our moral impressions of others turn out to be wrong? Given the dual importance of moral character perceptions in helping us organize information about the social world and helping us avoid harm, I propose that the experience of misperceiving character is deeply psychologically threatening. Across three studies, I use diverse methods to investigate this experience and its associated consequences. Evidence from these studies suggest that misperceiving moral character lowers participants' confidence that they can judge others accurately, increase participants' expectations of encountering immoral people, and disrupt participants' general sense that they understand the world around them. Taken together, these studies illuminate why unexpected character information about even distant others can have wide-reaching effects on perceivers, and provide new evidence on the importance of moral character perceptions in everyday life.

The presentation will begin at 12:00pm. Food and drinks will be provided.

